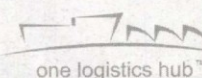


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R&D to lift logistics industry

PKT Logistics is investing in research and development in its push to turn Malaysia into a regional logistics hub, reports **JOY LEE**.



PKT Logistics Group Sdn Bhd chief executive Datuk Michael Tio has long pushed for Malaysia to be the next big logistics hub for Asean, and he is a big believer in the role that research and development (R&D) can play to help position the country for the role.

As part of its efforts to identify the components required to turn Malaysia into a regional hub, the logistics group established the Centre for Asean Logistics Studies (CALS) early last year.

CALS is the R&D centre of ALC College, the education arm of PKT. In June last year, it organised a six-month Asean Logistics Symposium, which saw 200 participants from academia, the private sector and the government coming together to determine the country's key strengths and weaknesses in the quest to become a logistics hub.

The symposium – a joint research programme between the UK's University of Hull, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and ALC – identified 10 key result areas (KRA) that cover various aspects of the industry, including human capital, infrastructure, green issues, corporate social responsibility and governance and regulations.

"After we came up with these 10 KRAs, those of us who were within CALS then signed up to do a PhD study in each of these areas with the University of Hull. So I am doing research on one of these topics as well," laughs Tio.

He hopes these research initiatives would lead to a joint effort in pushing logistics as a



PKT's Smart Truckers programme is aimed at cultivating professional truck drivers.

key transformation agenda by the Economic Planning Unit. Only then would there be a "kick" that would help to focus the spotlight on the industry.

CALS also provides a good platform for PKT to collaborate with other institutions to undertake more R&D projects for the logistics

industry. Last October, CALS inked an agreement with Universiti Teknologi MARA and Polytechnic Malaysia for just such a purpose.

But CALS is not just about collecting papers and planning for the local logistics industry. While the research work is ongoing under CALS, Tio says the centre is also devel-

oping several programmes to help change the perception of the Malaysian transport industry and raise its standards.

CALS recently launched its Smart Truckers programme which is aimed at cultivating professional truck drivers.

"People always think that truck drivers are low-income earners and do not have other options or have no career progression. In making Malaysia the next Asean hub, we want to change truckers from 'unprofessional' to professional people," says Tio.

He cites truck drivers in the UK as an example. "They have very professional drivers in the UK. They are not viewed as people with no better jobs. They earn well. We want to change people's perception and let them know that they can be truck drivers even if they are university graduates and still earn decently," he says.

Smart Truckers is a four-year programme that enables graduates to earn RM4,000 to RM5,000 while driving trucks. At the end of the four-year duration, they would be promoted to a senior executive level.

This, says Tio, would create some form of career progression for graduates looking for opportunities in the logistics industry.

CALS has its hands busy with working on all the critical points of the industry to ensure that Malaysia is ready to take the lead in logistics in the region.

Tio is confident that all the R&D efforts would go a long way towards educating talents in the industry and making Malaysia a competitive player in the market.